

Approved: June 9, 2025

TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, March 24, 2025 6:30pm
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium, 109 Front St., Winchendon, Mass.

Present: Rick Ward, Chair
Andrew Beauvais, Vice Chair
Audrey LaBrie
Melissa Blanchard
Erika Eitland

William McKinney, Town Manager
Debra Dennis, Executive Assistant

Finance Committee Members Present:

Tom Kane, Chair
Dr. Maureen Ward, Vice Chair
Charles Corts
Doug Delay
Mike Giovannucci
Adam Gardner

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Draft FY26 Final Balanced Budget no override
- Draft FY26 Final Balanced Budget with override
- Parade Permit Application-United Parish of Winchendon April 13, 2025
- Draft Ballot Question-2 ½ override
- Draft Board of Selectmen Minutes-March 10, 2025

6:30 PM Chair Ward called the meeting to order at 6:30P.M. Finance Chair Tom Kane called the Finance Committee to order. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Ward asked if anyone would be audio or video recording this meeting tonight to which there was no response heard.

1. JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE

Presentation of FY26 Final Balanced Budget by Town Manager-The FY26 Final Balanced Budget- Town Manager, William McKinney presented the proposed FY26 Budget. He said with this budget it would include the library and senior center closing, recreation would be limited, staff reduction in the police, fire, and DPW departments. The YMCA and WCAC would receive no funding from the town.

2. Member Comments

Finance Vice-Chair Dr. Maureen Ward asked the Town Manager if he had given the residents more options on the override amount such as \$2.9million, \$3.9 million and show what they would get for the larger amounts. Town Manager, William McKinney said it would be up to the Board to add other items to the election ballot. Selectwoman Eitland agreed with her and said \$1.9 million is the bare minimum that we need.

3. Public Comments

- Yvonne Senecal came forward. She thanked everyone for their hard work on the budget. She discussed contract negotiations, decreases in departmental budgets. She commented that the Fire Department should do better pertaining to overtime. She said the Department of Public Works could be more efficient pertaining to staff and equipment.
- Rick Lucier commented about his concerns with the override and increases to the water and sewer rates. He suggested a wage freeze for all town employees for a year.
- Karen Kast-McBride said as a member of the FY26 Ad Hoc Committee six members voted to request more than 1.9 million. She commented there are a lot of reasons the town is in this position and we need to work together so the town doesn't go downhill. If we close the library and senior center this would cause the town to go downhill.
- Jill Sackett came forward. She asked if the override doesn't pass we should look at other ways to cut costs to keep the Senior Center and Library stay open. She discussed not being open as many days per week.
- Marc Dorwart came forward and said he has come before this board several times to bring to their attention unlawful and inefficient equipment purchases by the DPW Director. He said he has the supporting documents but has never been asked for them.
- Pinkie Evans Liao said she came before the Board previously and asked what the town planned to do about the financial trouble. She wants to know what the plan is to correct this. She felt closing the Library and Senior Center would make people not want to live in this town. She said some residents can't afford the \$50 a month that you are saying it will cost us.
- Richard Ames commented about the Fire Department and how they battle danger. He commented about the \$650,000 in ambulance revenue they bring in.
- Rick McKenzie shared a quote "without a vision the people will perish". He stated the residents are perishing, and did not agree with increasing the taxes of the residents while threatening to close vital departments. It is disturbing

that people are using threats to get money. I know you are good people but act like it.

- Chair Ward thanked the public for their input and stated their points would be taken into consideration. The biggest message was that the town needs to come up with and voice the long term plans for the town.

Dr. Maureen Ward moved to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting at 7:51pm. Charles Corts seconded. Vote: All aye.

Selectwoman LaBrie moved for a five minute recess. Selectwoman Blanchard seconded. Vote: All aye.

4. **SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Selectwoman Eitland acknowledged the public input. In trying to get the fundamentals out what are the cuts so far can be clearly stated. Selectwoman LaBrie said she appreciates everyone coming out tonight, appreciate everyone watching this and who will come up tonight. Selectwoman Blanchard thanked everyone who attended tonight's meeting and is watching. She said the Board does their best to make this town where we want to live. Selectman Beauvais said we are at a crossroads here as a town we need to work together. Appreciate the feedback we received tonight.

Chair Ward said on March 13th the library hosted a legislative breakfast. The theme was empower library. He thanked Manuel King and staff for hosting the event. He said dogs need to be licensed by March 31st. The Annual Town Election is on May 5th. The candidates running for two three year seats are Audrey LaBrie, Tiffany Newton, Yvonne Senecal, and Christine Haslam- Giovannucci, Candidate for a One Year seat for Moderator is Glenn LaRochelle and a three year seat for Board of Health is Glenn LaRochelle. If he wins he needs to select one. One year seat candidate for School Committee is Tara Teixeira. No one is running for the School Committee three year seat which can be decided by write in votes. Thanked everyone who stepped forward.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** There was no public comments or announcements this evening.
6. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:** There are no scheduled public hearings this evening.
7. **APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:** There are no appointments/resignations before the Board this evening.
8. **PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:**
 - 8.1 Parade Permit-United Parish of Winchendon-April 13, 2025-There are no concerns/comments from any Department Head. Deacon at United Parish came forward and said they incorporated all houses of faith to join us.

Selectman Beauvais moved the Board approve the parade permit for United Parish of Winchendon Palm Sunday Parade on April 13, 2025 and waive the fee.
Selectwoman Eitland seconded the motion. Vote: All aye.

9. **BOARDS/COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS:** Selectwoman Labrie said the Capital Planning Committee has placed a holder article on the warrant.

10. NEW BUSINESS

10.1 Discussion and Vote Proposition 2 ½ Override Ballot Question(s)-Bill

McKinney said the budgets put forward are one with an override and one without. Chair Ward read the ballot question. Selectwoman LaBrie said what the drop dead date to present this is. Mr. McKinney said to be safe it should be this Thursday. Chair Ward proposed giving the voters two override options. Let the residents decide. Go to vote we have a small group that is dedicated. There will be people that come to vote by only seeing the sign on the side of the road. We can put information in here funding library, senior center, recreation. You are voting to keep these programs alive. You are going to keep the school programs. He said he is in favor of two options. Keep these department's alive, employees get raises, keep school programs. Let the towns people decide.

Selectwoman Eitland said she is in favor of two ballot questions. At 1.9 people need to understand this is for just level service. Need another higher number so people have a choice. Board consider a time on March 27th to have a meeting.

Selectwoman LaBrie said she supports two articles. The articles need to identify what the funds will be used for. Dr. Maureen Ward the Election Warden said DLS requirements can list what you will gain not what you will lose.

Selectman Beauvais said this decision shouldn't be made hastily. The new language needs to be a bit clearer. Investment in the school additional program. Come up with creative ways to invest more than net school spending. Look at way to get additional revenues. Freezing wages is just a temporary fix and we start to loose staff. It would be harder to attract more staff. It would be hard to attract businesses and new families. If we don't show we will invest in our town.

Chair Ward said the base is 1.9 million and 2.9 million is the next level up. He asked these to be available by Thursday which the Town Manager said we will have them by then. The public can see the budget with no override, with 1.9 override and then 2.9 override. It comes down to what the residents can afford. 1.9 million does not invest in the town.

Selectwoman Blanchard expressed that by adding another ballot question it could divide the citizens. Selectman Beauvais said looking back at first Tri-Board meeting you projected out because of rising costs. What can we do as a town to try to mediate that Mr. McKinney said economic development. Redevelopment authority getting different buildings in the town. New growth-pull building permits-drives

new growth numbers. Selectman Beauvais said looking forward we need to look into a committee made up of residents looking into economic development. He said if we are asking for an additional one million we need to make sure where the money will be used.

Selectwoman LaBrie moved to postpone the decision until Thursday March 27th @ 8am where a meeting of the Board will be held. Selectman Beauvais seconded. Vote: All aye.

11. **OLD BUSINESS:** There was no scheduled old business this evening.
12. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:** There was no Town Manager's Report this evening.
13. **TOWN MANAGER FINANCIAL UPDATE:** There was no Town Manager Financial Update this evening.

12. MINUTES:

12.1 Draft Board of Selectmen March 10, 2025-**Selectman Beauvais moved the Board approve the regular meeting minutes of March 10, 2025 as presented. Selectwoman Blanchard seconded. Vote: All aye.**

12.2 Draft Joint Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee Meeting March 11, 2025-
These were tabled this evening.

13. **COMMUNICATIONS:** Chair Ward said there is a School Committee public hearing tomorrow at 5pm in the auditorium. The next Board of Selectmen meeting is a joint meeting with the Finance Committee on April 14th. At that time there will be a presentation of the draft town warrant.

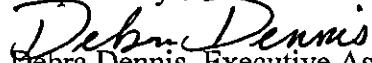
14. **AGENDA ITEMS:** There was no agenda items discuss this evening.

15. **EXECUTIVE SESSION-There was no scheduled executive sessions this evening.**

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** **Selectwoman LaBrie moved to adjourn. Selectwoman Blanchard seconded. Vote: All aye.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted



Debra Dennis, Executive Assistant